

|                               |                        |                     |  |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--|
| <b>Notice of Allowability</b> | <b>Application No.</b> | <b>Applicant(s)</b> |  |
|                               | 09/944,324             | WILLIAMS ET AL.     |  |
|                               | Examiner               | Art Unit            |  |
|                               | Calvin L Hewitt II     | 3621                |  |

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address--

All claims being allowable, PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS (OR REMAINS) CLOSED in this application. If not included herewith (or previously mailed), a Notice of Allowance (PTOL-85) or other appropriate communication will be mailed in due course. **THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWABILITY IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS.** This application is subject to withdrawal from issue at the initiative of the Office or upon petition by the applicant. See 37 CFR 1.313 and MPEP 1308.

1.  This communication is responsive to 18 April 2005.
2.  The allowed claim(s) is/are 1-17, 19-32, 34-46, 52-60, 64-66, 68-76, 78, 80 and 81.
3.  The drawings filed on 30 August 2001 are accepted by the Examiner.
4.  Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
  - a)  All
  - b)  Some\*
  - c)  None
 of the:
  1.  Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  2.  Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  3.  Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* Certified copies not received: \_\_\_\_\_.

Applicant has THREE MONTHS FROM THE "MAILING DATE" of this communication to file a reply complying with the requirements noted below. Failure to timely comply will result in ABANDONMENT of this application.  
**THIS THREE-MONTH PERIOD IS NOT EXTENDABLE.**

5.  A SUBSTITUTE OATH OR DECLARATION must be submitted. Note the attached EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT or NOTICE OF INFORMAL PATENT APPLICATION (PTO-152) which gives reason(s) why the oath or declaration is deficient.
6.  CORRECTED DRAWINGS ( as "replacement sheets") must be submitted.
  - (a)  including changes required by the Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review ( PTO-948) attached
    - 1)  hereto or 2)  to Paper No./Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (b)  including changes required by the attached Examiner's Amendment / Comment or in the Office action of Paper No./Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_.

Identifying indicia such as the application number (see 37 CFR 1.84(c)) should be written on the drawings in the front (not the back) of each sheet. Replacement sheet(s) should be labeled as such in the header according to 37 CFR 1.121(d).
7.  DEPOSIT OF and/or INFORMATION about the deposit of BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL must be submitted. Note the attached Examiner's comment regarding REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEPOSIT OF BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL.

**Attachment(s)**

1.  Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2.  Notice of Draftperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3.  Information Disclosure Statements (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08),  
Paper No./Mail Date 3/12/02, 6/10/02, 9/23/02, 6/9/03
4.  Examiner's Comment Regarding Requirement for Deposit  
of Biological Material
5.  Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6.  Interview Summary (PTO-413),  
Paper No./Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_.
7.  Examiner's Amendment/Comment
8.  Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance
9.  Other \_\_\_\_\_.

JAMES P. TRAMMELL  
 SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER  
 TECHNOLOGY CENTER 3600

***Status of Claims***

1. Claims 1-17, 19-25, 26-32, 34-60, 64-66, 68-76, 78, 80 and 81 have been examined.

**EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT**

2. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Gregory Durbin on 18 April 2005.

3. The Application has been amended as follows-  
Claims 47-51 have been canceled.

Amend claims 1, 52, 80 and 81 as follows:

1. (Twice amended) A computer network based system for facilitating a self-organizing workforce of one or more workers comprising:  
at least one worksite on the computer network;

at least one work module on the computer network associated with the at least one worksite, the at least one work module for enabling the one or more workers to work on at least one idea;

at least one worker module on the computer network associated with the at least one worksite, the at least one worker module for tracking at least one worker credential for the one or more workers;

wherein the at least one worker credential is a function of the one or more workers' work on the at least one idea;

wherein the at least one worker credential includes a weighted links credential, a weighted wisdom credential, and a weighted merit credential;

wherein an influence credential is calculated using the weighted links credential, the weighted wisdom credential, and the weighted merit credential;

wherein the at least one work module includes a voting module [adapted] for enabling at least two of the one or more workers to work on the at least one idea by providing a vote on the merits of the at least one idea;

wherein each of the workers votes are weighted according to the influence credential; and

determining an outcome [based on determining the outcome] of the idea using the influence credential.

52. (Twice amended) A computer network based method for a plurality of workers to collaborate on an idea and to receive compensation for the collaboration comprising:

    providing a message board on the computer network having at least one idea posted thereon, the at least one idea having an associated number of merit points;

    providing a posting module on the computer network for a first worker to provide a post of a discussion about the idea;

    providing a voting module on the computer network associated with the post for additional workers to provide a vote on the post;

    assigning an influence credential to the first worker and the additional workers, the influence credential calculated using a weighted merit credential, a weighted links credential, and a weighted wisdom credential; [and]

    assigning a portion of the associated number of merit points to the first worker as a function of the post and influence credential; and

determining an outcome for the posted idea using the influence credential.

In claim 80, change “The method of claim 79...” to “The method of claim 78...”

In claim 81, change “The method of claim 79...” to “The method of claim 78...”

***Reasons for Allowance***

4. Claims 1-17, 19-25, 26-32, 34-46, 52-60, 64-66, 68-76, 78, 80 and 81 have been allowed.
5. The present invention is dedicated to a system for collaborative problem solving.

Collaborative problem solving across computer networks is old and well-known. For example, Toomey et al. (US 6,119,147) and Gilliam et al. (US 5,878,214) teach virtual meetings ('147, figures 1-5; '214, column/line 4/43-5/64) Applicant's system uses a weighted voting method to solve problems or determine a course of action or outcome. Ferguson (US 5,995,951) teaches a system for collaborative problem solving where users rank solutions ('951, figures 1, 2, 6, 9, 12 and 13). Chisholm (US 5,400,248) teaches a weighted voting scheme where a user can place a conditional vote that can change depending on the vote of another user. The closest prior art of Ginn (US 6,362,837) teaches a voting method where the weight of a user's vote is based on a user's voting record. Ginn, however, does not disclose a specific weighting algorithm. Therefore, the present invention distinguishes itself from the prior art as it decides an outcome using an influence credential assigned to workers

voting on an idea, wherein the credential is calculated using a weighted merit credential, a weighted links credential, and a weighted wisdom credential.

### ***Conclusion***

6. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure:
  - Nakamura teaches weighted voting where a user's weight is determined by the number of correct answers
  - "Recommender systems" Reznick et al., Communications of the ACM, v40n3, p56-58, Mar 1997
7. Any comments considered necessary by Applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."
8. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the Examiner should be directed to Calvin Loyd Hewitt II whose telephone number is (571) 272-6709. The Examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday from 8:30 AM-5:00 PM.

If attempts to reach the Examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the Examiner's supervisor, James P. Trammell, can be reached at (571) 272-6712.

Any response to this action should be mailed to:

Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks  
c/o Technology Center 2100  
Washington, D.C. 20231

or faxed to:

(703) 305-7687 (for formal communications intended for entry and after-final communications),

or:

(571) 273-6709 (for informal or draft communications, please label  
"PROPOSED" or "DRAFT")

Calvin Loyd Hewitt II  
April 19, 2005

JAMES P. TRAMMELL  
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER  
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 3600